

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church
971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905
Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic
(814) 244-4063

The Sunday of All Saints **(06.30.2024.)**

Matthew 10:32-33, 37-38, 19:27-30

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first. **(KJV)**

We gather in God's Holy Church today to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. We hear the message of the Holy Gospel. We have the opportunity to partake of the Precious Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

We are Serbian Orthodox Christians. At Baptism we confessed Jesus Christ as King and as God. On Friday, we remembered the St. Lazarus, the martyrs of Kosovo and all those having lost their lives in defense of the faith.

Today on this first Sunday after Pentecost we remember all the saints and martyrs. We have benefitted beyond measure from the saints and martyrs through the centuries.

Our lives are enriched and shaped by the faith of the saints and martyrs through the centuries. The Divine services throughout the years incorporate the saints and martyrs in the Church's liturgical life.

The lives of the saints and martyrs are included in the history books of the Church. They are depicted in the iconography and frescoes. Hymns and liturgical texts reference and are written in honor of the saints and martyrs.

Today's Gospel emphasizes the importance of taking up our personal crosses and following Jesus Christ. We learn how to take up our crosses and follow Jesus Christ by steadfastly attending the church services and heeding the Gospel.

We learn about Jesus Christ by being attentive to the content of the Divine services and teachings of the Church. Our lives are enriched when we read the Holy Scriptures and the lives of the saints and martyrs.

The lessons of the lives of the saints and martyrs have endured through the centuries. The world's heroes are not anchored and centered in the Lord Jesus Christ, Worldly heroes come and go. Worldly heroes are soon forgotten.

Saints and martyrs withstand the test of time. They shine the light of Jesus Christ through their lives. Each of us decides who to follow, to look up to, and admire. We each decide whose lives we will study to learn life's lessons.

Wisdom prevails in turning to the lives of the saints and martyrs. Jesus Christ exists in and shines through the lives of the saints and martyrs. Lasting lessons for life exist in the lives of the saints and martyrs.

The lives of the saints and martyrs teach us how to deal with life's problems and challenges. The Church has preserved the lessons and teachings of the saints and martyrs down through the centuries.

We know from the Scriptures that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever." (Heb.13:8) The saints and martyrs realized Jesus Christ's Divinity and certainty. The saints and martyrs embraced Jesus Christ completely.

Believers have the opportunity each day to conform to the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Constant repentance and embracing Jesus Christ are possible for each person.

The saints and martyrs conclusively prove that repentance and change are possible for anyone willing to embrace and follow Jesus Christ. Hardened criminals and flagrant sinners have become saints.

Today believers hear about the saints and martyrs of the Church. Now is the time to forsake ways of life that have nothing to do with Jesus Christ. Embracing Jesus Christ requires a conscious desire to fill the heart, mind and soul with Christ.

Love for Jesus Christ is the most secure investment in the Kingdom of God. Love for each other and forgiveness in personal life facilitate the journey to God's Heavenly Kingdom and eternal life.

Parishes go through changes during the years. Believers are expected to mature in Jesus Christ as they go through the life-cycle. Jesus Christ is ever-ready to lead believers from the Baptismal font to God's Heavenly Kingdom.

The saints and martyrs have defined and opened the path to travel to God's Kingdom and eternal life. Wise believers garner strength from the lives of the saints and martyrs. Wise believers follow the path of saints and martyrs.

Parents do well to use the saints and martyrs as examples of soul-enriching heroes for their sons and daughters. Families benefit from praying to and honoring their patron saint in their home on a consistent basis.

Parish churches normally honor the saint or martyr for which they are named. The patron saint or martyr of the parish church is a soul enriching and protecting resource for the parishioners during their entire lives.

Thank God for the saints and martyrs through the centuries. Thank God for the Church preserving the knowledge about the lives of the saints and martyrs. Today is a day of great joy in God's Holy Church.

**The Sunday of All Saints. Holy Martyrs Manuel, Sabel and Ismael. June 17/30. 2024.
Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic**

PROLOGUE OF OHRID

1. THE HOLY PROPHET AMOS

Amos was born in the village of Thecua near Bethlehem. Being of simple origin and life. Amos was a swine herdsman for a wealthy man of Jerusalem. But God, Who does not regard a person by his outward appearance but rather by the purity of his heart, and Who took both Moses and David from their sheep and appointed them leaders of the people, chose this Amos as one of His prophets. Amos rebuked King Uzziah and his pagan priests for idolatry and dissuaded the people from worshipping the golden calves in Bethel, teaching them to worship the One Living God. When the chief pagan priest, Amaziah, persecuted Amos, he prophesied that the Assyrians would conquer Israel, that they would slay the king and the sons of Amaziah, and that the Assyrian soldiers would defile Amaziah's wife before his eyes because he had led the people into adultery with idols. All of this later came to pass. The son of the pagan priest struck the prophet on the forehead with his staff so forcefully that Amos fell down. Barely alive, Amos was brought to his village of Thecua, where he surrendered his holy soul to God. Amos lived in the eighth century before Christ.

2. THE HOLY MARTYRS VITUS, MODESTUS AND CRESCENTIA

St. Vitus was born in Sicily of renowned but non-believing parents. Modestus was his teacher and Crescentia was his governess. St. Vitus was baptized at an early age, and at the age of twelve he withdrew to live a life of great asceticism. Angels appeared to him and directed and strengthened him in his asceticism, and he himself was as radiant and beautiful as an angel of God. The hand of a judge who beat him withered, but Vitus healed the hand through prayer. His father was blinded, seeing in his room twelve radiant angels "whose eyes were as stars and whose faces were as lightning." Vitus restored his sight through prayer. When his father wanted to kill him, an angel appeared to Vitus and took him, together with Modestus and Crescentia, to Lucania on the shore of the river Silaris. Here Vitus worked many miracles over the infirm and the insane. At the request of Emperor Diocletian, Vitus traveled to Rome, where he expelled an evil spirit from the emperor's son. The emperor did not reward him for this but, on the contrary, cruelly tortured him because he would not worship the dumb idols. However, the Lord delivered him from all torments and, by His invisible hand, transported him back to Lucania, where he, Modestus and Crescentia all reposed in the Lord. The relics of St. Vitus are located in Prague, the Czech Republic.

3. THE VENERABLE MARTYR DOULAS

Doulas lived a holy life in a monastery in Egypt. One of his brethren, out of envy, accused him of sacrilege: the stealing of ecclesiastical articles. They removed the cassock from the innocent Doulas and turned him over to the prince for trial. The prince ordered him to be scourged and wanted to cut off his hands, according to the law for such a crime, but at that moment that brother repented and declared the innocence of Doulas. After twenty years of exile and humiliation, Doulas was restored to the monastery, and on the third day he reposed in the Lord. His body vanished in a miraculous way.

4. THE HOLY MARTYR LAZAR [LAZARUS], PRINCE OF SERBIA

Lazar was one of the Serbian noblemen who ruled the Serbian empire after the death of Tsar Dušan. After the death of Tsar Uroš, Patriarch Ephraim crowned Lazar as the Serbian king. Lazar sent a delegation to Constantinople with the monk Isaiah to implore the patriarch to lift [remove] the anathema from the Serbian people. He fought against the Turkish powers on several occasions. Finally, on June 15, 1389 A.D., he clashed [fought] with the Turkish Emperor Amurat at Kosovo Polje [the Field of Blackbirds, Kosovo Polje] where he was beheaded. His body was translated to and interred in Ravanica, the monastery he founded [Zaduzbina] near Čuprija, and was later translated to [New] Ravanica in Srem, and from there, during the Second World War (1942), it was translated to Belgrade and placed in the Cathedral Church of the Holy Archangel Michael,

where it rests today incorrupt, extending comfort and healing to all those who turn to him with prayer.^(*) St. Lazar restored the monasteries of Hilandar [Mt. Athos] and Gornjak. He built Ravanica and Lazarica [in Kruševac] and was a benefactor of the Russian monastery St. Pantaleon [Mt. Athos] as well as many other churches and monasteries.

(*) In 1989, on the occasion of the 600th anniversary of his martyrdom, St. Lazar's relics were again translated to the Monastery of Ravanica in Ćuprija. -- *Trans.*

5. SAINT EPHRAIM, PATRIARCH OF SERBIA

As the son of a priest, Ephraim yearned for a spiritual and ascetical life from an early age. He fled to Mt. Athos when his parents wanted him to marry. He later returned and lived a life of asceticism in the Ibar gorge and in the Monastery of Dečani [Kosovo]. When rivalry and war broke out concerning precedence in the state and, unfortunately, even in the Church, the Synod [Sabor] chose Ephraim to succeed the deceased Sava as patriarch in 1375 A.D. When he was informed of his election, he wept bitterly but was unable to refuse. He crowned Prince Lazar as Tsar in 1382 A.D., then renounced his throne and turned it over to Spyridon and again withdrew to the wilderness. Following the death of Spyridon in 1388 A.D., Tsar Lazar begged him to accept the throne again. He governed the Serbian Church in the difficult time of the defeat at Kosovo [1389 A.D.] until 1400 A.D. when he died in the eighty-eighth year of his earthly life and took up his habitation with the Lord, Whom he loved. His relics repose in the Monastery of Peć [Kosovo].

6. BLESSED AUGUSTINE, BISHOP OF HIPPO

Augustine turned from paganism to Christianity, thanks to the counsels, tears and prayers of his mother, Monica. He was a great teacher of the Church and an influential writer, but with certain impermissible extremes in his teaching. As bishop of Hippo, he glorified the Lord for thirty-five years and lived a total of seventy-six years on earth (354-430 A.D.).

SAINT VITUS

The most excellent Vitus, full of heavenly honey,
Before the unbelievers, confessed Christ,
And mocked the lifeless idols
And the dark idolatrous soothsayers.
He glorified Christ as the power of God;
To his father and to the judge, he taught the truth,
But against him, both of them took up arms,
And for the young Vitus, torments prepared.
But God, His martyrs protects
And glorifies those who glorify Him.
Vitus needed to witness to the Lord Christ
Before the emperor
And in Rome, to suffer publicly,
That his name would be more glorified.
Little Vitus the angels held,
Little Vitus the angels led.
And his soul, the angels bore;
Into Paradise they took it and to God presented it.

REFLECTION

It is not always easy to conquer the spirit of vanity and conceit in oneself. Only the great spiritual directors have succeeded in this, with God's grace above all, with constant vigilance over their souls, and with very delicate spiritual sensitivities and distinctions. Abba Nisteroes was once walking with one of his brethren. Suddenly they spotted a serpent on the road. The brother quickly moved aside, and the great

Nisteroes fled after him. "Are you also afraid, father?" the monk asked Nisteroes. The elder replied: "No, my son, I am not afraid, but I had to flee otherwise-- otherwise I would not have escaped from the spirit of vanity." That is: "Had I remained in place, you would have been amazed at me, and from that I would have become vain!"

CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate the miraculous healing of many who were sick: *And (they) besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole* (St. Matthew 14:36):

1. How many who were sick only touched the hem of the Lord's garment and were made whole;
2. How my soul can be healed if I touch His Body and Blood, as the physical garment of His Divinity.

HOMILY

About the poor man and his Creator

"He who mocks the poor, blasphemes his Maker (Creator)" (Proverbs 17:5).

If you are wealthy, in what are you wealthy, if not in the property of God? The things which constitute your wealth--whose are they, if not God's? Therefore, if you take pride in what you possess, you are taking pride in the property of another; you taking pride in that which is loaned to you by God. Why do you then mock the poor man, who has less of someone else's property in his hands? Why do you mock him if he has borrowed less from God than you? If he has taken less, he owes less; and you who have taken more, owe more. Not only should you not mock the poor man but you should admire him. Behold, he struggles on the battlefield of this world with much less means than you. Both of you are soldiers, but you fight as a soldier abundantly equipped with all that is necessary, and he fights naked and hungry. If both of you succumb and surrender to the enemy, he will be judged more leniently than you. However, if you are both victorious, he will receive a greater reward than you, and his victory will be more celebrated than yours.

He who mocks the naked and hungry soldier mocks his king. He who mocks the poor defames his Creator. If you know that the poor man's Creator is your Creator, the one and the same, you will not mock him. If you know that the poor man stands in the same military regiment as you, you will cover him, feed him, and bring him closer to yourself.

O Omnipotent Lord, boundless is Your wisdom in the economy of Your creation. Illumine us by Your Holy Spirit, that we may marvel at that economy and behold all of Your creatures with reverence and love, beholding them through You.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Services this Week

- **2nd Sunday after Pentecost (07.07.2024.) The Nativity of the St John the Forerunner**
 - *Divine Liturgy starts at 09:30 AM*

Donations June 23, 2024

Offering - \$ 1,233.00 Candles - \$50.00

Large Candles

For Health of Olga Lucas from Sharon & Jim Urban
(2) IMO Devich & Lovrich Families from Tom & Carole McAllister
IMO Christine Bulich, Louis & Mary Daley from Olga Bulich
IMO Charles Bulich from Olga Bulich
IMO of Bartis & Pavich Families from Joe Bartis

UPCOMING EVENTS

Band of Brothers – July 11-13th and 17 – 20th
(Please see Suzette if you are interested in working)

JOIN US FOR



SATURDAY, AUGUST 10TH 2024
NOON TO 6:00 PM
ORCHESTRA SRPSKI SINOVI



Johnstown Slavic Festival – September 20-21st